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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Hungary

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SUBJECT Procedures in Dealing with Deserters

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SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. After induction, recruits are told that soldiers who desert in uniform with weapons will be given capital punishment. For attempted flight without weapons, they will be imprisoned from 15 years to life. Relatives of deserters, if they know of the desertion, will be punished with imprisonment from one to five years.
2. It is estimated that four to six desertions occur monthly in every regiment. Although informers are rewarded, only about half the deserters are recaptured. It occasionally happens that soldiers of various units desert in groups. Six artillerymen thus fled together in April 1952 from the artillery regiment at Mór. The AVH could find only three of them. In another instance, six men deserted from their unit at Budaörs. All were caught.
3. Arrested deserters from all over the country are brought to the Budapest military prison, Margit-körut. Although the soldiers are not beaten or tortured, the food is so insufficient that some soldiers, on being taken to the second floor for examination, fall down the stairs from weakness.
4. The military court observes all the prescribed formalities. Present at the proceedings are a president, two judges, a defense counsel, and a state's prosecutor. A deserter who cannot hire a lawyer is assigned counsel. To hire a private attorney costs a minimum of 1,000 forints. His role is limited in that he "acknowledges the danger of the accused to the social order" and advises the accused that he should consent to the regular punishment.
5. The lightest punishment is 14 to 20 months in a stockade. At first all condemned soldiers are confined either in the Margit-körut or in the military prison at Fő Street 78. After a few months they are sent into labor camps. For example, in 1951 military convicts worked on the construction of the military airfield at Kékes.

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